

Teaching American History- Lesson Plan

Spiritual Beliefs versus Christianity

Lesson Overview: The Plains Indians believed in a Great Spirit. This Spirit had power over all things- the animals, the clouds, the rivers etc... They had dreams and visions that came from the Great Spirit. The Earth was the mother of all the spirits and the Sun was the Earth's light. The purpose is to identify ways the Indians honored the Great Spirit and how this beliefs conflicted with the Christian beliefs that were mandated upon them.

Learner Objective: The task is analyze the material from the lecture and examine how the two cultures could come to an agreement of religion policies. The students will be ask the answer 3 questions in constructive response form.

Grade Level: 10 grade

Materials and Resources Needed: Notes from the lecture and any research that the students deem necessary. Pictures or replicas of the below items will be on display. Students will be asked to identify Christian beliefs has they have already been taught.

Time Needed for Completion: 1 class period- 51 minutes

Teacher Input:

Outline Notes:

1) The Medicine Man

- a) He was a holy man with much power and knowledge
- b) He healed the sick, interpreted dreams and led rituals
- c) He tried to change the weather and predict the future

1) Medicine women

- a) She used herbs has medicine and took care of all medicines-similar to a nurse today.

1)The Vision Quest

a) A young man would fast for 3 or 4 days and go to a quiet lonely place and believed he would see a visions or signs from the Great Spirit.

b) When he would return to the camp the visions would be interpreted

c) The man might be given a special name or be given gifts for a vision.

Note: This is a very important part of the development of spirituality for the Indians. These visions were meaningful and taken to heart.

3) Shields: The shield had great spiritual power. They were painted with symbols of animals and birds to protect the owner. Eagle feather were sometimes attached to the shield.

4) Mandellas: These were similar to the shield and made from animal parts. It was put in home of the warrior for protection.

5) Dream Catcher: This shaped like a web. The dreams were caught in the web, while the good dreams flowed through to the dreamer. All dreams had meaning to the Plains Indians.

6) Sweat Lodge: The lodge was a dome-shaped tent made of willow branches covered with hides and blankets. The center had a pit.

a) Men would set in the lodge for hour to purify their bodies and mind, they also prayed and meditated.

7) The Sun Dance: The Sun Dance varied with many tribes. It was a process of pain to their bodies as a sacrifice to the Great Spirit.

a) The Sun Dance could be very harmful to the body and was outlawed for a time in by the United States Government.

1) One of the tortures was to stick eagle talons through your chest and pick you up in the air.

Burial Ceremonies: The Plains Indians wrapped their dead and placed them on a high brackets or tree. The body would decay and relatives would return to bury them. They wanted the Great Spirit to take the soul for the afterlife.

Notes: Because the Indian believed that the Great Spirit was creator of all things, they used everything with reverence. Every part of the buffalo was used for a purpose. The bear, the owl, the horse and coyotes all had their purpose in their everyday life. They held things that the Great Spirit supplied as sacred.

Christianity: A Religion that came about 1700 years before Indians were introduced to it. It was based on the belief that Jesus Christ was the son of God. Eternal happiness could not be obtained unless through the teaching of Jesus Christ. The Europeans and the Indians had many cultural differences. Some could be compromised and a relation could exist. The religious part had no common ground.

Both religions took total commitment in order to gain the rewards it offered.

Assignment: Please answer the following questions with a constructive response. (These answers will vary. The overall knowledge of Indian culture should be noted.)

1) In your opinion, how does the duties of the medicine man relate with the duties of a family doctor? (*The duties of the medicine man had some of the same duties of the family doctors. He also had duties of the families priest or pastor of the church. The medicine men took care of his patients both physically and spiritually. The overall well being of the individual was looked at by the medicine men*)

2) The Indians used animal symbols for protection. Is this the same as wearing a cross for Christians? Please explain the similarities, if any. (*The uses of animal symbols for protection is very similar to the use of Christian symbols worn by people today. They represent the faith in that symbol to give you strength, courage, love or whatever they will need to overcome the task before them. An example would be the St. Christopher metal used for safe travel.*)

3) How did the Indian try to purify their bodies? Does the Christian religion do any rituals similar to this? (*The Indians used sweat lodges and sun dances to purify the body and mind. The Christian religion does not recommend torturous ways to purify the body. To purify the mind, the recommendation of prayer and asking for forgiveness is used.*)

Scoring Guide: 10 points possible for each question

10 points- complete sentences with accurate knowledge

5 points- knowledge of subject but not in constructive response

2 points- inaccurate answer but attempted to respond